

## Government interest spurs IITs, IIMs to take Massive Open Online Courses Route

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NEW DELHI: Premier institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology and Indian Institutes of Management are planning to go the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) way, in the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi planning an ambitious launch of the Swayam Bharat programme.

While IIT Bombay (IIT-B) and IIM Bangalore have already announced the launch of MOOCs with overseas partners, IIM Calcutta (IIM-C) could be next in line, with the institute submitting a proposal to the HRD ministry. IIT Kanpur is developing its own platform for MOOCs called MOOKIT, which might soon start competing with popular international MOOC platforms like edX and Coursera.

"MOOCs and online delivery is clearly the future," says IIM-C director Saibal Chattopadhyay. IIT-B is currently trying out two courses, the basic computer programming course for undergraduates and a thermodynamics course, in the MOOCs mode. "More are planned. There have been multiple meetings with MHRD and IIT Bombay expects to be a very active partner in the government's initiative," says Narayan Rangaraj, dean — academic programmes.

Apart from working on MOOKIT that will help delivering the MOOCs, IIT Kanpur is also engaged in developing MOOCs around verticals like agriculture and computer science, says TV Prabhakar, professor at the institute.

IIT Kanpur has just wrapped up its MOOC on MOOCs programme where over 2,300 students participated and is currently offering two more MOOC programmes. It is also running a 'MOOC on Mobiles'. The interest in MOOCs among premier institutions is being attributed to a heightened interest in online education by the new government.

"It is a clear mandate from the government as in the last Budget, Rs 100 crore was allocated to online education for MOOCs and virtual classrooms," says Rohin Kapoor, senior manager (Education practice) at Deloitte. MOOCs might also help achieve the target of training 500 million people by 2022, he adds.

IIM Bangalore is planning to launch courses on the edX platform in 2015. The institute is also planning to engage around 15 per cent of its faculty to deliver MOOCs over the next two years, according to its director, Sushil Vachani.

IIM Indore and IIT Gandhinagar have been running broadband distance learning programmes and are now keen on running some courses on the MOOC platform. "We are looking forward to the creation of a MOOCs platform by MHRD, and plan to use it," says IIM Indore's director Rishikesha Krishnan. IIT Patna is planning to start flipped classrooms wherein a student can study material on MOOCs and then attend a live class anywhere in the country.

"Only to some extent do MOOCs bridge the skills gap, since it's a oneway communication. However, it can be successful in a flipped model as it will enhance learning and build a platform for collaborative discussions," says Ajai Chowdhry, founder of HCL, who also teaches at IIT Patna.

Like IIT Kanpur, IIT Kharagpur too is working on solutions around MOOCs. It is developing automatic programmes to grade assignments in MOOC programmes. "We are also working on 'learning analytics', which will help us track the students' pattern of learning. Both these programmes should make MOOCs more interactive," says Plaban Kumar Bhowmick, assistant professor at IIT Kharagpur's Centre for Educational Technology.

Working on MOOCs, NPTEL, which is closely working with IIT Madras, launched its first course on programming algorithms and data structures this year and will be launching eight new courses in January including humanities.